



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS



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Immediate Crisis Counseling and Help Available to People Affected by Hurricane Sandy

Hurricanes can threaten an individual's sense of control and feelings of safety, and they can affect many aspects of our lives. In addition to property damage and other losses, events like Hurricane Sandy can result in significant emotional distress. The toll-free Disaster Distress Helpline (1-800-985-5990) is sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Association (SAMHSA). Callers are immediately connected to trained professionals from the closest crisis counseling center in the nationwide network. Staff provides confidential, multilingual counseling for anyone experiencing psychological distress and needs help or support after a disaster. The staff also provides referrals and other support services.

"People who have been severely affected by Hurricane Sandy may have strong emotional or physical reactions to it" says Craig Stenning, Director of the Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals. "Common warning signs can include feeling physically or mentally drained, having difficulty making decisions or communicating, changes in appetite or sleep patterns or experiencing considerable grief, overwhelming sadness or anger. Although these are all normal and expected reactions to the experience, some people may need extra help to cope with this event."

If you have trouble coping, help is available from a variety of sources. Talk to people you trust (family members, friends, co-workers, clergy members). In the workplace, you may be able to get assistance from the human resources department or the Employment Assistance Program. Sometimes, an event is too powerful to handle on your own and professional assistance may be necessary. The Disaster Distress Helpline is a new, free resource that is available for immediate assistance and support.

The Helpline is accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Anyone seeking emotional help can call 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746. The Helpline can also be accessed at <http://disasterdistress.samhsa.gov/>

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